

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COLORADO STATE OFFICE
2850 YOUNGFIELD STREET
LAKEWOOD, COLORADO 80215-7093
December 20, 2000

In Reply Refer To:
CO-931
8300 (P)

EMS Transmission 12/20/2000
Instruction Memorandum No. CO-2000-011
Expires: 09/30/2001

To: Field Office Managers

From: State Director, Colorado

Subject: Final Recreation Guidelines

Attached is the following Recreation Guidelines to Meet Public Land Health Standards on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Managed Lands in Colorado.

Please take appropriate action to include the guidelines in your Resource Management Plans. This can be accomplished through a plan maintenance action. The guidelines are being announced through a press release and will be posted on the Colorado BLM website.

If you have any questions regarding the guidelines, contact Tina McDonald at 303-239-3716, or Dennis Zachman at 303-239-3883.

Signed by
Ann J. Morgan
State Director

Authenticated by
Don Snow
EMS Operator

Attachment

cc: Deputy State Director - Colorado, Resource Services
Branch Chief - Colorado, Social and Cultural Services
External Affairs (CO-912)

RECREATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES TO MEET PUBLIC LAND HEALTH STANDARDS ON BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LANDS IN COLORADO

December 11, 2000

INTRODUCTION

Colorado's population has grown significantly in the past ten years - the state's growth rate is among the highest in the nation. As the state becomes more crowded, an increasing number of people seek out undeveloped land to recreate. In addition, Colorado remains a popular destination for tourists, especially those seeking experiences in a backcountry or wildland setting. As a result, public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) are absorbing increasing recreational use. In many areas, the increased use has resulted in user conflicts and damage to vegetation, soils, wildlife habitat, and other natural resources.

In February 1997, Standards for Public Land Health in Colorado (Standards) were approved by the Secretary of Interior and adopted as decisions in all of BLM's land use plans, commonly referred to as Resource Management Plans (RMP). The Standards describe natural resource conditions that are needed to sustain public land health. The Standards encompass upland soils; riparian systems; plant and animal communities; special, threatened, and endangered species; and water quality. The Standards relate to all uses of the public lands. The full text of the Standards is found in Attachment 1.

Based on the increased awareness and understanding of the social and environmental impacts of outdoor recreation, the following establishes recreation management guidelines to help achieve and maintain healthy public lands as defined by the Standards. The guidelines are tools, methods, and techniques that can be used by managers to maintain or meet the standards.

It is the intent of these guidelines to encourage and permit a variety of recreational opportunities and enjoyable experiences that are managed to avoid conflicts and serve diverse recreational interests, while at the same time minimizing and preventing adverse impacts to land health, ecosystems, and cultural or natural resources, including historic and archaeological sites, soils, water, air, vegetation, scenery, wildlife habitats, riparian areas, endangered or threatened species, and wilderness areas. Recreational uses are a highly regarded social value of our society which impacts our public lands, and accordingly BLM in Colorado will plan, manage, and pursue funding sources so that various services, areas, and activities are environmentally sustainable for present and future populations.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

A. Standards 1 & 2: Upland Soils and Riparian Systems

1. Manage recreational activities to maintain sufficient vegetation on upland areas to protect the soil from wind and water erosion and to buffer temperature extremes.
2. Minimize disturbances and manage recreation use in riparian areas to protect vegetation, fragile soils, springs, and wetlands.
3. Plan and locate routes, trails, and developments away from riparian and wetland areas, and highly erosive soils.
4. Reduce stream crossings to the minimal number dictated by the topography. Reduce sedimentation and compaction associated with stream crossings.
5. Manage watercraft types and uses as appropriate to protect riparian systems and water quality from adverse impacts.

B. Standard 3: Healthy Plant and Animal Communities

1. Manage recreational use on public lands to promote the survival and health of native plants and animals.
2. Protect against the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.
3. Protect wildlife habitat by preserving connectivity and avoiding fragmentation.
4. Minimize wildlife disturbances and artificial attractions such as feeding wild animals or improper disposal of garbage.
5. Protect plant and animal communities by limiting recreational use by type, season, intensity, distribution, or duration.

C. Standard 4: Special Status and Threatened and Endangered Species

1. Protect habitat for federal and state Threatened and Endangered Species and other special status species.

D. Standard 5: Water Quality

1. Manage recreational uses in coordination with other uses on public lands to achieve or exceed applicable water quality standards.
2. Control water quality impacts resulting from recreational use, such as human waste, trash, and other elements.

E. Public Values and Education

1. Use information and interpretative services as major tools to protect public land health and significant natural, cultural, and recreational resources. As appropriate, improve public knowledge by locating kiosks, interpretive signs, and visitor information facilities at visitor contact points. Provide guidebooks and pamphlets for users.
2. Increase efforts to educate public lands visitors about an ethic of responsible use, through programs such as Tread Lightly, Leave No Trace, Project Archeology, the International Mountain Bike Association's "Rules of the Trail," and the Public Lands Watch program.
3. Communicate to the members of the public their individual rights and responsibilities in the use and preservation of public lands, including the recognition of the rights and responsibilities of others because public lands are our legacy for the future.
4. Initiate and maintain collaborative partnerships among government agencies, local governments,

business communities, volunteers, user groups, stakeholders, educational institutions, individuals, and the private sector to achieve recreation management objectives and implement these guidelines.

5. Encourage the development of a concise educational program to be implemented at the initial point of contact with the public, to promote public land values, knowledge of rights and responsibilities, environmental awareness, communication between the BLM and the public, and changing management practices and policies.

6. In order to mitigate adverse impacts to the public lands, work with the private sector to integrate a responsible recreational use message with the goods or services they provide.

F. Recreation Management

1. Protect natural resources with a priority on management methods that effectively maintain healthy public lands. Utilize the least restrictive but appropriate limitations on public lands activities and users. Recognize that in some cases various levels of regulations and limits on users are necessary.

2. In the development of recreation plans, use the best current and sound recreation science practices to enhance public land health.

3. Develop and maintain updated inventory and monitoring information concerning both the resource and the recreational uses.

4. Use on-the-ground presence as a tool to protect public lands.

5. In order to prevent adverse impacts to the public land health, establish appropriate levels and types of recreational use. Utilize public participation in the development of these levels and types. Where long-term adverse impacts are created or anticipated by recreational uses, limit or control activities through specialized management tools including, but not limited to, designated campsites, permits, area closures, and limitations on stays and number of users.

6. Locate permanent facilities away from riparian areas, cultural sites, or other locations subject to adverse impacts, and relocate existing facilities away from areas that have been adversely impacted.

- If it is determined that a facility must be located in these areas, it must be properly mitigated. For example, if it is determined that a path must cross a wetland area, appropriate mitigation such as a wooden boardwalk may be constructed to avoid water quality problems and other wetland disturbance.

7. Manage recreational uses to protect cultural, historical, and archeological resource sites, and areas where there are unique wilderness or environmental values. Where appropriate, set aside some areas for certain scientific, environmental, and archaeological activities, and limit or prohibit other recreational uses in these areas.

8. Allow and manage dispersed recreation activities so that the nature and the frequency of such activities does not create adverse impacts to public land health.

9. Set aside areas, limited in number and size, for certain high impact recreational uses, such as off-road vehicles, motorcycles, and target practice to be relatively unrestricted. Establishment of such areas must be consistent with the Standards and other RMP decisions.

10. Manage activities associated with hunting and fishing to protect the resource from adverse impacts to public land health.

11. Often a land area is utilized by many users; implement feasible management methods to maintain the essential enjoyment elements of the various user groups.

12. Encourage public land recreational activities near population centers and highway corridors by placement of appropriate visitor use infrastructure. Provide restrooms and other facilities adequate

for anticipated uses at designated campgrounds, trail heads, and other areas where there is a concentration of recreational users.

13. Build collaborative partnerships with local communities and the private sector to provide recreational support services on private land near public land access points where possible.

G. Routes, Trails, and Travel management

1. Work expeditiously toward the goal of a statewide inventory of routes and trails.

2. Place a high priority on developing local travel management plans with public participation.

Travel management plans should consider all forms of travel in the affected area (i.e., motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized). The plans should address travel management prescriptions (such as open, closed, and limited off-road vehicle designations), and identify appropriate actions to meet or maintain public land health standards and meet the needs of the visitor.

3. Until local travel management plans are prepared and implemented, BLM will take prompt action using existing authorities to prevent the proliferation of roads and trails that have caused or will lead to conditions whereby the Standards are not met. Existing authorities include, but are not limited to, restrictions under the specific rules section for off-road vehicle use¹, amending land use plan decisions pertaining to off-road vehicles², and closure and restriction orders for other uses³.

4. When developing travel management plans and/or implementing travel management decisions, managers should consider the following:

a. Where adverse impacts, user conflicts, damage to ecosystems, injury to the environment, or other conditions are anticipated or are occurring that would impair the health of the public lands and diminish recreational opportunities, restrict recreational travel to designated routes or take other appropriate action such as seasonal closures.

b. Cross-country travel (i.e., off of roads and trails) should only be permitted in areas that meet the designation criteria for “open” areas⁴, and the Standards.

c. Where conflicts among recreational users can be minimized, combine multiple uses on one route instead of establishing parallel or alternative routes.

d. Where and when appropriate, plan, develop, and designate in cooperation with user groups new routes and trails, as well as selected areas for open travel, that enhance and expand recreational opportunities and encourage responsible use with little or no adverse impacts.

e. Relocate, abandon, or close routes and trails seasonally or temporarily that adversely impact riparian and wetland areas, wildlife, highly erosive soils, cultural sites, and sensitive ecological systems, and abandon routes that are duplicated or unneeded. Where routes, trails, or other facilities have been abandoned, provide for restoration and revegetation of

¹ 43CFR8341.2 (“Special rules” section - Off-Road Vehicles)

² 43CFR 1610.5-5 (“Amendment” section - Resource Management Planning) ; 43CFR8342 (“Designation of Areas and Trails” - Off-Road Vehicles)

³ 43CFR8364 (“Closures and Restrictions” - Visitor Services)

⁴ 43CFR8342 (“Designation criteria” section - Off-Road Vehicles)

the site.

5. Where adverse impacts or safety considerations warrant, limit or prohibit public access when authorizing specific routes to oil and gas locations, mines, timber sales, or other areas or sites under permit or lease.
6. Provide clear maps, signs, guidelines, descriptions, and other information for users of routes, trails, and other facilities or areas, including mileages and estimated hours of travel by type, limitations caused by travel surfaces and conditions, and availability of loop trails. Provide clear information to the public when closures, seasonal use, and other regulations or limits are placed on public lands.

RECREATION MANAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

In addition to the implementation objectives included in the Standards, the following critical issues should be considered for successful implementation of the Recreation Guidelines:

1. The guidelines contained in this document are designed to provide direction, yet allow flexibility for local implementation of RMP decisions. Typically, decisions made in RMPs provide resource goals and objectives, allocate resources, identify land areas for limited, restrictive or exclusive use, and provide guidance for implementation. During the implementation process, additional planning may be needed to better define goals, make objectives more specific, and identify or add specific detail to implementing actions. Frequently, multiple guidelines may be used to maintain or achieve the land health standards. All implementing actions will be completed in consultation, cooperation, and coordination with local communities and the interested public.
2. Declining federal budgets challenge the ability of the BLM to provide services adequate to meet growing recreational demands, create difficult management concerns, and place the health of public lands at risk. Addressing current and future needs will require increased agency budgets as well as collaboration, partnerships, and shared responsibility among public land agencies and the various constituencies using public lands.
3. Increasing recreational uses of public lands create increased needs for funding, manpower, and other resources to simultaneously protect the environmental and ecological values of public lands consistent with multiple use and sustained yield principles. Management practices specifically tailored to recreational impacts are necessary to improve and expand recreational facilities and protect effective planning, maintenance, enforcement, monitoring, and programming of public recreational opportunities. Possible supplementary funding resources to meet these goals should be considered, including non-federal resources such as state, county, and local governments, non-profit entities, and private interests.
4. Important to implementing multiple use recreation management and environmental management objectives are: an achievable scientific approach to the inventory and analysis of biological and ecological data; gathering of accurate data on recreational needs, benefits, demands, carrying capacities, and trends; and developing consensus on difficult issues relating to economically sustainable programs, use controls, other limitations and resolution of user conflicts.

5. The involvement by the BLM of the public, other governmental entities, and various recreational constituencies is necessary throughout the planning, use, and evaluation cycle to establish appropriate management priorities. This involvement should encourage a high degree of public interaction, foster collaboration, educate and inform the public regarding important land use issues, and contribute to the successful implementation of the Standards for Public Land Health and Recreation Management Guidelines.

6. Not all RMP decisions require subsequent planning such as activity plans or transportation management plans. If the actions needed to implement RMP decisions are well defined, then only appropriate environmental assessment documentation may be needed. If, however, the decisions and information in RMPs do not contain enough detail, additional planning may be needed to better define goals, make objectives more specific, and identify or add specific detail to implementing actions.

7. During the implementation process, it may be determined that existing RMP decisions are no longer valid or do not adequately meet the needs of the resource or the public. Therefore, it may be necessary to initiate a plan amendment to address the affected decisions in the RMP.⁵

8. It is not possible for each acre to achieve every standard. It is important to assess and consider the overall health of a landscape when applying the recreation guidelines. For example, when determining how to manage vehicle parking in a landscape, it may be determined to concentrate vehicles in a small confined area, rather than having uncontrolled parking throughout the landscape. In this example, this approach would result in improved resource conditions overall although the site specific impacts at the small parking area would be high (e.g., vegetation disturbance).

The guidelines contained in this document are designed as “tools” to assist managers implement recreation management decisions and actions. At this stage, the environmental effects of implementing the guidelines are too broad, speculative, or conjectural to lend themselves to meaningful environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Furthermore, most implementing actions will be subject to further NEPA analysis. Therefore, adoption of the guidelines are categorically excluded from NEPA analysis⁶.

GLOSSARY:

Activity plan: A detailed, site specific plan for management of one or more resource programs. An activity plan provides additional specificity needed to implement RMP decisions. Activity plans are completed only if necessary. When multiple programs are addressed, activity plans may be called Integrated Activity Plans or Coordinated RMPs.

Guidelines, Recreation: Recreation management tools, methods, and techniques designed to

⁵ Subject to the provisions of 43CFR1610.5-5 (“Amendment” section - Resource Management Planning)

⁶ Pursuant to 516 DM 2.3A(2) and 516 DM 2, Appendix 1.10.

provide activities, experiences, and benefits for the recreating public while maintaining or achieving healthy public lands as defined by the standards. The recreation guidelines contained in this document are directed toward maintaining or achieving public land health.

Landscape: A defined land area that forms a management unit or basis of analysis.

Mechanized Vehicle: Any non-motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, travel on or immediately over land. An example of a mechanized vehicle is a mountain bike.

Motorized Vehicle: Synonymous with off-road vehicle. Examples of this type of vehicle include all-terrain vehicles (ATV), Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV), motorboats, and snowmobiles.

Non-Motorized Use: Recreational human and animal foot traffic. Examples include horses, llamas and other domestic animals.

Off-Highway Vehicle: This term is synonymous with the term off-road vehicle (or ORV). Whereas off-road vehicle is used in the regulations and includes any motorized vehicle, the term off-highway vehicle (or OHV) is a more contemporary term.

Off-Road Vehicle: Any motorized vehicle capable of, or designed for, travel on or immediately over land, water, or other natural terrain, excluding: (1) any non-amphibious registered motorboat; (2) any military, fire, emergency, or law enforcement vehicle while being used for emergency purposes; (3) any vehicle whose use is expressly authorized by the authorized officer, or otherwise officially approved; (4) vehicles in official use; and (5) any combat or combat support vehicle when used in times of national defense emergencies.

Off-Road Vehicle Designations:

- Open area means an area where all types of vehicle use is permitted at all times, anywhere in the area subject to the operating regulations and vehicle standards set forth in subpart 8341 and 8342 of this title.
- Limited area means an area restricted at certain times, in certain areas, and/or to certain vehicular use. These restrictions may be of any type, but can generally be accommodated within the following type of categories: Numbers of vehicles; types of vehicles; time of season of vehicles use; permitted or licensed use only; use on existing roads and trails; use on designated roads and trails; and other restrictions.
- Closed area means an area where off-road vehicle use is prohibited. Use of off-road vehicles in closed areas may be allowed for certain reasons; however, such use shall be made only with the approval of the authorized officer.

Protect: To take actions to guard against injury or loss.

Standards for Public Land Health: A description of conditions needed to sustain public land health; the standards relate to all uses of the public lands in Colorado.

Recreation Support Services: Resource, facility, and visitor management actions taken to provide activities, experiences, and benefits for the recreating public.

Resource Management Plan (RMP): A BLM multiple use planning document, prepared in accordance with Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, that

- a. establishes resource conditions goals and objectives to be attained;
- b. allocates resources and identifies allowable uses;
- c. identifies land areas for limited, restrictive, or exclusive uses; and
- d. provides guidance for implementation of the decisions made in the plan.

Transportation Management Plans: An activity plan that focuses on all aspects of transportation in a land area. Transportation planning can also be accomplished within Integrated Activity Plans, or Coordinated RMPs where multiple resource programs are planned for concurrently.

Visitor Use Infrastructure: Amenities such as roads, parking areas, and facilities, to protect the resource and support the recreation user in his/her pursuit of activities, experiences, and benefits.

ATTACHMENT 1

Note: The following is the full text of the Standards as it appears in each Resource Management Plan in Colorado.

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH **IN COLORADO** November 1996

PREAMBLE

Humans use and derive benefits from public lands administered by BLM in Colorado in many ways: to earn a livelihood, to recreate, for education, for science, and to enjoy and appreciate open spaces and irreplaceable cultural heritage resources. Healthy public lands and the uses of those lands contribute to the health and economic well-being of Colorado communities. In turn, healthy human communities create healthy public lands by conserving, protecting, and properly utilizing public land resources and by effectively resolving conservation issues. Healthy public lands and healthy human communities are interrelated; therefore, social, economic, and environmental considerations must be properly balanced.

The interdependent relationship between human communities and their public land brings together people of diverse backgrounds and interests. Open, honest, and sincere interactions, in a spirit of trust and respect, are essential to achieving and maintaining healthy public lands. While all individuals have a voice in public land management goals, the responsibility to maintain healthy public lands ultimately falls with the users of those lands.

To help determine what constitutes healthy public lands, Standards for Public Land Health, by which the health of the land is measured, need to be established. This document defines such standards for BLM lands in Colorado.

INTERPRETATION

Standards and guidelines can be an effective communication tool, providing a common understanding of expected resource conditions and acceptable management practices. Although the standards are the measures by which health of the land will be assessed, the results of these assessments are not well-suited for direct reporting of accomplishments. Any reporting of progress associated with application of these standards will need to consider and address the following factors:

- Standards and guidelines for each state will be different.
- To be meaningful, public land health assessment must be determined based upon all standards and not solely upon each individual standard.
- It will be many years before a full assessment of public land health is completed. Initially, statistics concerning public land health may be skewed due to the priority setting process which directs management attention to lands where problems exist.

Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health, and relate to all uses of the public lands. The standards are written in a two-part format. The standard is first described in a statement. Then indicators which relate to the standard are identified. The indicators help define the standard and describe features which are observable on the land. Additional indicators may also be applicable to some sites, and some indicators may not apply to every specific site. While a site should match the indicators it is not necessary for each site to perfectly match all the indicators to comply with the standard.

The appropriate use of resources will be determined by the authorized officer on a case by case basis, in consultation, coordination and cooperation with local cooperators and the interested public and in accordance with law and regulation.

Standards are observed on a landscape scale. It is not possible for each acre to achieve every standard. For example, a mosaic of vegetation types and age classes may produce the diversity associated with a healthy landscape; however, some individual vegetation communities within the mosaic may lack diversity.

Standards always relate to the potential of the landscape. Climate, landform, geologic, and biologic characteristics are factors that affect potential. Each landscape has a specific ability to provide values important to humans such as timber, livestock forage, water, wildlife, and minerals. Therefore, the potential of a site can also be altered through a wide variety of human socio-economic factors. When this occurs, a new potential exists. The authorized officer, through the consultation process, will evaluate the site based on its new potential. Comparative analysis of nearby landscapes, (that appear to have similar climate, geology, landform, biologic and socio-economic characteristics), is considered the most reliable means to identify the potential landscape.

It is common for landscapes with nearly identical potential to differ, in their appearance, and in the values they provide. Variability results from both natural plant succession patterns, and human uses. While the climax plant community is significant as an indicator of potential, the climax community does not automatically provide the comparative basis for evaluating the standard. In many circumstances local goals will identify a different plant community which provides the most optimum values. When this occurs, the plant community identified in the local goal replaces the climax community as the foundation for evaluating the standard.

Often, existing information will be sufficient to determine public land health. It is not always necessary to collect measurable baseline data for each standard on each site to determine public land health. However, baseline data is important to establish so that changes can be observed and measured. The BLM's authorized officer will determine the amount and type of data each situation requires in consultation, coordination and cooperation with local cooperators and the interested public. In areas where the standards are not being achieved, current uses and management actions will be reviewed and modified if necessary to assure significant progress toward achieving a healthy ecosystem.

STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH

STANDARD 1: *Upland soils* exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and minimizes surface runoff.

Indicators:

- Expression of rills, soil pedestals is minimal.
- Evidence of actively-eroding gullies (incised channels) is minimal.
- Canopy and ground cover are appropriate.
- There is litter accumulating in place and is not sorted by normal overland water flow.
- There is appropriate organic matter in soil.
- There is diversity of plant species with a variety of root depths.
- Upland swales have vegetation cover or density greater than that of adjacent uplands.
- There are vigorous, desirable plants.

STANDARD 2: *Riparian systems* associated with both running and standing water, function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods. Riparian vegetation captures sediment, and provides forage, habitat and bio-diversity. Water quality is improved or maintained. Stable soils store and release water slowly.

Indicators:

- Vegetation is dominated by an appropriate mix of native or desirable introduced species.
- Vigorous, desirable plants are present.
- There is vegetation with diverse age class structure, appropriate vertical structure, and adequate composition, cover, and density.

- Streambank vegetation is present and is comprised of species and communities that have root systems capable of withstanding high streamflow events.
- Plant species present indicate maintenance of riparian moisture characteristics.
- Stream is in balance with the water and sediment being supplied by the watershed (e.g., no headcutting, no excessive erosion or deposition).
- Vegetation and free water indicate high water tables.
- Vegetation colonizes point bars with a range of age classes and successional stages.
- An active floodplain is present.
- Residual floodplain vegetation is available to capture and retain sediment and dissipate flood energies.
- Stream channels with size and meander pattern appropriate for the stream's position in the landscape, and parent materials.
- Woody debris contributes to the character of the stream channel morphology.

STANDARD 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations, and ecological processes.

Indicators:

- Noxious weeds and undesirable species are minimal in the overall plant community.
- Native plant and animal communities are spatially distributed across the landscape with a density, composition, and frequency of species suitable to ensure reproductive capability and sustainability.
- Plants and animals are present in mixed age classes sufficient to sustain recruitment and mortality fluctuations.
- Landscapes exhibit connectivity of habitat or presence of corridors to prevent habitat fragmentation.
- Photosynthetic activity is evident throughout the growing season.
- Diversity and density of plant and animal species are in balance with habitat/landscape potential and exhibit resilience to human activities.
- Appropriate plant litter accumulates and is evenly distributed across the landscape.
- Landscapes composed of several plant communities that may be in a variety of successional stages and patterns.

STANDARD 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Indicators:

- All the indicators associated with the plant and animal communities standard apply.
- There are stable and increasing populations of endemic and protected species in suitable habitat.
- Suitable habitat is available for recovery of endemic and protected species.

STANDARD 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and antidegradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CCR 1002-8), as required by Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

Indicators:

- Appropriate populations of macroinvertebrates, vertebrates, and algae are present.
- Surface and ground waters only contain substances (e.g. sediment, scum, floating debris, odor, heavy metal precipitates on channel substrate) attributable to humans within the amounts, concentrations, or combinations as directed by the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado (5 CCR 1002-8).

FLEXIBILITY

The standards are designed to maintain or achieve healthy public lands while allowing for the development of local goals and objectives. For example, on sites of similar potential a desired plant community designed to provide deer winter range would differ from one designed for cattle summer range, yet both could achieve the standards. Local goals and specific objectives consistent with standards will be developed by BLM in consultation, cooperation and coordination with local cooperators and the interested public.

IMPLEMENTATION

Recognizing that social and economic factors must be considered in achieving healthy public lands, the authorized officer will coordinate, consult and cooperate with the local cooperators and interested publics during all phases of implementing standards and guidelines, whether it be for an allotment, group of allotments, or watershed. BLM will strive to make use of collaborative approaches involving the various interested publics within an affected allotment, group of allotments, or watershed. The Resource Advisory Council (RAC) may be requested by any party to assist in reaching agreement in resolving disputes. As greater understanding of ecosystems, including socio-economic factors, becomes available, it will be applied to our management of public lands.

The section below describes the general process for applying the Colorado standards and guidelines in the field. If mutual agreement on a course of action is reached at any point during this process, such agreement may eliminate the need for some of the process steps described.

It is unreasonable to assume that standards and guidelines will be applied to all public lands immediately upon adoption. Therefore, it is imperative that a logical system for prioritizing work be adopted. Following are some criteria that the authorized officer uses to prioritize areas such as allotments, watersheds, or other landscapes:

- Are there situations where legal requirements must be met?
- Is there information to indicate resources at risk, or that the severity of resource damage demands immediate attention? (monitoring results, allotment categorization, professional judgement, results of ESI or other inventory data, etc.)
- Is use conflict present?
- Is there public concern or interest for possible resources at risk?
- What is scheduled for completion according to the RMP implementation schedule?
- Where can efficiencies with limited resources be realized?
- Where are the best opportunities to effect positive change toward public land health?
- Are there permits or other resource use authorizations that need to be acted upon (e.g. grazing, right-of-ways, timber sales, etc.)?

The following steps describe a typical sequence for assessing public land health and trend on established priority areas. The authorized officer will:

1. Using public scoping, identify issues and values in detail; identify existing management objectives from sources such as the Resource Management Plan (RMP), and activity plans.
2. Assess public land health and if possible determine the trend relating to public land health.
3. Determine the relationship between existing land uses and the assessed health of the land.
4. If needed, establish measurable objectives or redefine/modify existing management objectives that will result in desired conditions. (Note: If significant changes to RMP decisions are needed, an amendment to the RMP will be needed.)
5. Identify which land use actions will achieve the desired objectives and resource conditions.

NOTE: This document addresses the livestock grazing guidelines; guidelines that relate to other land uses will be consulted or developed as necessary to deal with the appropriate objectives.

6. Identify specific management practices, in conformance with the guidelines, and attach as terms and conditions on

grazing permits, or as stipulations on specific projects or actions.

7. Establish an evaluation schedule to determine if the standard is being achieved or if significant progress is being made.

- If the evaluation indicates that objectives are being achieved or there is movement towards the objective, continue with management practices.

- If the evaluation indicates no movement or movement away from the objectives, reassess the objectives and management actions. Determine the objectives and management actions necessary to assure significant progress toward achieving the standards. Amend plans and permits as necessary.

The authorized officer will take immediate administrative action to implement appropriate guidelines upon a determination that the following three circumstances all apply:

1. Public land health is unacceptable;
2. Existing management is not likely to produce significant progress towards public land health; and
3. The consultation process has failed to yield a negotiated resolution.

If needed, future modifications to the Standards and Guidelines may be made. Typically, a proposal for modification is presented to the local Designated Field Official (DFO). The DFO then forwards the proposal for modification to other DFOs throughout the state for consideration in consultation with the RACs. (A copy of the proposal for modification is also submitted to the State Director). The DFOs considering advise from the RACs then submit to the State Director recommendations regarding the proposal for modification. The State Director decides if the proposal for modification has merit. If so, a determination is made whether the modification is a maintenance change to the Resource Management Plans or requires a plan amendment. Maintenance changes require no action except to make a notation in the RMPs (43 CFR 1610.5-4). Actions requiring a RMP amendment will require NEPA analysis and conformance with 43 CFR 1610.5.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED IN THE STANDARDS

Activity Plan - A more detailed and specific plan for management of a single resource program to achieve specific objectives undertaken only when needed to implement the more general Resource Management Plan (RMP) decisions. Activity planning is now accomplished with Integrated Activity Plans (IAP), or Coordinated Resource Management Plans (CRMP).

Allotment - An area of land designated and managed for the grazing of livestock by one or more livestock operators. It generally consists of public lands, but may include parcels of private or State-owned lands. The number of livestock and period of use are stipulated for each allotment.

Allotment Management Plan - A written plan for livestock grazing management, including supportive measures if required, designed to attain specific multiple-use management, sustained yield, economic and other goals in a grazing allotment.

Best Management Practices - Best Management Practices (BMPs) are methods, measures, or practices to prevent or reduce water pollution, including, but not limited to, structural and nonstructural controls and operation and maintenance procedures. Usually BMP's are applied as a system of practices rather than a single practice. BMPs are selected on the basis of site-specific conditions that reflect natural background conditions and political, social, economic, and technical feasibility.

Biodiversity or Diversity - The variety of plants and animals that occupy a landscape.

Climax - The natural plant community that occurs at the end of the plant successional path, in the absence of

disturbances or physical site deterioration.

Desired Plant Community - A plant community that meets the goals established for a landscape.

Ecosystem - Living organisms and non-living substances, interacting to produce and exchange material between the living and non-living parts.

Endemic Species - A species or subspecies native to a particular location with narrow limits of habitat variability.

Goal - A general description of a desired future condition. (e.g. improve watershed conditions, achieve a desired plant community)

Grazing Permit - A document authorizing use of public lands within an established grazing district.

Habitat Management Plans - A type of activity plan relating to wildlife habitat.

Heritage Resources - Any prehistoric, historic, landscape, site, building, structure, or object, normally greater than 50 years of age and includes artifacts, records, and material remains associated therewith.

Interested Public - An individual, group or organization that has submitted a written request to the authorized officer to be provided an opportunity to be involved in the decision making process for the management of livestock grazing on specific allotments or has submitted written comments to the authorized officer regarding the management of livestock grazing on a specific allotment.

Landscape - A defined area that forms a management unit or basis of analysis.

Land Treatments - Controlled burning, mechanical, biological, or chemical manipulation of the land.

Local Cooperator - An individual who directly influences the management of public lands, and who's cooperation is needed to alter existing conditions. BLM permit holders are local cooperators.

Objective - A measurable description of a desired future condition that specifies, what is to be accomplished, location, and time frame.

Plant and Animal Communities - Those plant and animals which occur on public land; the definition excludes people, livestock, and crops.

Potential - The ecological condition of an area that is possible due to physical, biological, social, and economic factors.

Preliminary Assessment - An analysis of a tract of land that provides general information on the status of the land. This assessment does not provide in-depth issue analysis.

Public Lands - Those tracts of land owned by the people of the United States, that are administered by the Bureau of Land Management.

Riparian - An area of land directly influenced by permanent water. It has visible vegetation or physical characteristics reflective of permanent water influence. Lakeshores and streambanks are typical riparian areas. Excluded are such sites as ephemeral streams or washes that do not have vegetation dependent on free water in the soil.

Trend - The direction of change in health of the land, observed over time.

Recommended Recreation Guidelines December 11, 2000

From August 8 to September 22, 2000, the Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) office accepted public comment (via phone, fax, e-mail, and letter) on its Recommended Recreation Guidelines. Each comment, that was received within the specified time frame, has been read and considered. Below are responses to comments that were specific to the guidelines, or were made by multiple respondents. Numerous comments were received that were personal viewpoints or opinions, which were also read and considered. Colorado BLM thanks each respondent for taking the time to help with this process.

1. **Comment:** BLM needs to complete an inventory of current roads and trails.

BLM Response: This concept is supported in G.1. of the Recreation Guidelines.

2. **Comment:** Off Highway Vehicles (OHV) activity has minimal impacts on wildlife.

BLM Response: OHV activity can have a negative impact on wildlife. One example is the effect OHVs has on the connectivity of wildlife habitat and corridors. Section B of the Recreation Guidelines provides guidance to help mitigate these situations.

3. **Comment:** Use science in decision making.

BLM Response: BLM relies heavily on the input of biologists, geologists, hydrologists, and other experts that provide scientific facts to aid BLM managers in making sound land management decisions. In addition, F.2. of the Recreation Guidelines incorporates the use of recreation science in decision making.

4. **Comment:** Shared use on trails will not always work because of differences in desired experiences and for safety reasons.

BLM Response: Guidance on how to deal with this issue is adequately captured in G.4.c. of the Recreation Guidelines. Furthermore, collaborative transportation planning will address use of roads and trails (see Guideline G.2.).

5. **Comment:** Adopt a “closed unless posted open” policy.

BLM Response: This comment is beyond the scope of these guidelines; a policy of this scope would need to come from the BLM Director.

6. **Comment:** Opposes “closed unless posted open” policy.
- BLM Response:** This comment is beyond the scope of these guidelines; a policy of this scope would need to come from the BLM Director.
7. **Comment:** Gathering public input is fine, but to forego decision making authority is not acceptable; BLM should not be engaging in “partnerships”.
- BLM Response:** BLM has found that using collaborative processes and partnerships (see Guideline E.4.) produces better decisions. BLM is ultimately responsible for land management decisions for land it administers.
8. **Comment:** BLM needs additional enforcement and on-the-ground presence.
- BLM Response:** This concept is captured in the Recreation Guidelines, under #3 in the Implementation Issues.
9. **Comment:** Assess and monitor social and economic impacts from closing trails.
- BLM Response:** Economic and social impacts are analyzed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process when preparing transportation plans.
10. **Comment:** Having all of the OHV use concentrated in one area is worse than dispersed use.
- BLM Response:** The concept of concentrated use may have merit when considering the overall health of a larger landscape area, and may be considered during the development of RMPs, Activity Plans, and Transportation plans. More information on this can be found in the Recreation Guidelines under #8 in the Implementation Issues section.
11. **Comment:** BLM should increase user fees and keep the money on site for maintenance.
- BLM Response:** At this time, most fees collected at BLM recreation sites in a given year go into the general fund. During the next fiscal year at least 85 percent of the monies collected at a specific site are redistributed to that site for maintenance, upkeep, improvements, etc. BLM is exploring ways to retain 100 percent of fees collected at from a specific site to remain there. Currently, there are three pilot studies underway in Colorado in which fees collected at a site, remain at that site.

12. **Comment:** Trails that have already been established, should be kept open.
- BLM Response:** Travel management planning will help determine the overall road system for an area, including roads that should be kept open and roads that should be closed and rehabilitated.
13. **Comment:** Require new engine design on OHVs for noise mitigation.
- BLM Response:** This recommendation is beyond the scope of these Recreation Guidelines. This recommendation would require a change in federal and/or state regulations.
14. **Comment:** Sustainable access is needed.
- BLM Response:** The majority of BLM land in Colorado will remain accessible to vehicles. The guidelines will help BLM meet the challenge of providing sustainable access while maintaining the health of the land.
15. **Comment:** Marketing should not be happening; this will only encourage more use and damage (see E.6).
- BLM Response:** The intent of E.6. in the Recreation Guidelines was not adequately conveyed with the term “marketing”. Guideline E.6. will be modified to read:
In order to mitigate adverse impacts to the public lands, work with the private sector to integrate a responsible recreational use message with the goods or services they provide.
16. **Comment:** Include the public in the process.
- BLM Response:** Several of the Recreation Guidelines encourage public participation in managing recreation (see E.3., E.4., G.2., G.4.d., Implementation Issue #5)
17. **Comment:** BLM should not use categorical exclusions when authorizing OHV routes and/or recreation facilities.
- BLM Response:** In the vast majority of cases, proposed recreation developments, facilities, or plans will require NEPA documentation with public involvement/notification. Any use of categorical exclusions will be guided by regulations and BLM Department Manual 516.

18. **Comment:** Increasing participants and decreasing areas may lead to more illegal damage.
- BLM Response:** Increasing populations in the West have increased demand on BLM land for all types of recreation opportunities. It is not the intent of the Recreation Guidelines to close large tracts of BLM land. Rather, the Recreation Guidelines provide tools to managers to meet planning challenges during this time of growth and change.
19. **Comment:** OHV users are singled out in the guidelines.
- BLM Response:** The Recreation Guidelines take into consideration and provide guidance for all activities that take place on BLM administered lands.
20. **Comment:** Consider growth in OHV use when planning.
- BLM Response:** Use of OHVs on public lands is valid when done responsibly and in compliance with the Standards for Public Land Health. BLM realizes the popularity of OHVs will continue to increase and will consider this in long-term recreation planning.
21. **Comment:** Include OHV travel in dry washes in the plan.
- BLM Response:** OHV travel in dry washes will be considered in the travel management plans. Each area will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and input from scientific experts will be utilized in making decisions on use of the area.
22. **Comment:** Work with other agencies; implement similar policy to the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).
- BLM Response:** In a ongoing effort toward more consistent and seamless land management, the BLM continues to work with the USFS, as well as other federal and state agencies. Where policies or regulations differ, they will be identified as constraints in collaborative management efforts. This concept is discussed in E.4. of the Recreation Guidelines.
23. **Comment:** Do not allow cross-country travel.
- BLM Response:** Except in some specified areas, cross-country vehicle travel on BLM land is not appropriate for it leads to the proliferation of roads and trails. The guidelines provide a variety of tools for managers to address this problem.

24. **Comment:** Set aside non-motorized areas to provide natural soundscapes.
- BLM Response:** Setting aside non-motorized areas are allocative decisions that must be addressed through the land use planning process. BLM currently has ongoing efforts to look at setting aside lands for non-motorized use (i.e., wilderness inventory).
25. **Comment:** Educate the public; how does BLM plan to educate on the guidelines, rules, fines, etc.?
- BLM Response:** This comment is addressed in E.2. and E.3. in the Recreation Guidelines.
26. **Comment:** “G.4.b. makes no sense”; interpreted to mean that motorized use can only occur in areas in which no restrictions are necessary.
- BLM Response:** This guideline is confusing. Guideline G.4.b. will be modified to read: *Cross-country travel (i.e., off of roads and trails) should only be permitted in areas that meet the designation criteria for open areas, and the Standards for Public Land Health.*
27. **Comment:** Provide clear rules and fines.
- BLM Response:** BLM proposes no change in rules (i.e., regulations) at this time. E.2. and G.6. in the Recreation Guidelines provide guidance to improve information and education efforts.
28. **Comment:** Public lands should not be sold to the “highest bidder”.
- BLM Response:** In some instances it is necessary for the agency to pursue outside funding sources (grants, partners, etc.) to accomplish on-the-ground projects to the quality and standard that the public expects. BLM is ultimately responsible for land management decisions for land it administers.
29. **Comment:** Designate roads, routes, and trails.
- BLM Response:** To address issues with increasing OHV use, the development of a designated roads and trails system will be seriously considered in transportation planning (see Guideline G.2.).
30. **Comment:** Redefine types of OHV; different OHVs have different impacts on the environment (e.g. motorcycles, ATVs, 4 wheel drives).
- BLM Response:** This suggestion is beyond the scope of these guidelines.
31. **Comment:** All uses (not just motorized use) must be included when addressing resource concerns.

BLM Response: Section G of the Recreation Guidelines addresses all forms of travel. Section G.2., specifically states that “Travel management plans should consider all forms of travel in the affected area (i.e. motorized, mechanized, and non-motorized).”

32. **Comment:** BLM should discern between cosmetic vs. real/actual damage.

BLM Response: The recreation guidelines primarily address land health standards. However, visual resources are a concern in overall recreation management and will also be considered in management decisions.

33. **Comment:** Close all illegal trails; do not grandfather them in.

BLM Response: Except for areas where transportation planning has been completed, or in Wilderness Study Areas, it is difficult to define “illegal trails”. In areas that are currently “open” to vehicular use, trails are not “illegal”. Section G. of the Recreation Guidelines identifies measures to help managers mitigate the proliferation of roads and trails.

34. **Comment:** How will the BLM’s national and CO state OHV policies work together?

BLM Response: Any OHV strategy prepared for Colorado will be consistent with the National policy/guidance. Although unlikely, if consistencies are identified, the Colorado guidance will be modified to maintain consistency with National policy.

35. **Comment:** When the term “appropriate” is used in the guidelines (e.g., F.9., F.11.), who determines what is appropriate?

BLM Response: The authorized official determines what is “appropriate”. The term “appropriate” is vague; Sections F.9., and F.11. will be reworded.

Guideline F.9. will be modified to read:

Set aside areas, limited in number and size, for certain high impact recreational uses, such as off-road vehicles, motorcycles, and target practice to be relatively unrestricted. Establishment of such areas must be consistent with the Standards for Public Land Health and other Resource Management Plan decisions.

Guideline F.11. will be modified to read:

Often a land area is utilized by many users; implement feasible management methods to maintain the essential enjoyment elements of the various user groups.

36. **Comment:** What is “unacceptable” proliferation of roads in G.3., and who determines it?

BLM Response: The placement of the word “unacceptable” as presently used

is confusing. The intent is to prevent unacceptable resource damage. Unacceptable damage occurs when the Standards for Public Land Health are not/will not be met. Guideline G.3. will be modified to read:

Until local travel management plans are prepared and implemented, BLM will take prompt action using existing authorities to prevent the proliferation of roads and trails that have caused or will lead to conditions whereby the standards for Public Land Health are not met.

37. **Comment:** A thorough assessment of OHV use is clearly necessary.

BLM Response: The management of OHV use on the public lands is a high priority throughout BLM. A national OHV guidance is being prepared, and Colorado BLM is examining management options.

38. **Comment:** BLM should develop a monitoring plan.

BLM Response: Monitoring is considered and addressed in individual plans.

39. **Comment:** BLM should develop an enforcement plan.

BLM Response: Colorado BLM is currently working with other land management agencies to develop effective and efficient law enforcement plans and procedures.

40. **Comment:** BLM should not allow motorized vehicles in administratively proposed wilderness areas and other wilderness quality lands.

BLM Response: Interim Management Policy (IMP) for Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) provide direction regarding the use of vehicles in said areas. There are no open areas within WSAs. Some WSAs are closed to all vehicle use, while other WSAs allow vehicles on existing roads, as long as it is consistent with the IMP.

41. **Comment:** No supplementary funds should be sought for recreational activities.

BLM Response: The recreation budget in BLM, although increasing in recent years, is not sufficient to meet management demands and needs. Additional funding helps meet those needs.

42. **Comment:** Please eliminate the language that singles out motorized recreation.
- BLM Response:** Motorized use is not singled out in the recreation guidelines; the guidelines address all uses. For example, G.2. specifically states that transportation plans “should consider all forms of travel in the affected area (i.e., motorized, mechanized, non-motorized, etc.)
43. **Comment:** In F.9., of the Recreation Guidelines, objections to the wording “limited in number and size”, referring to high impact recreational uses.
- BLM Response:** The clause is included to demonstrate that managed intensive recreation use of BLM is an exception, not the norm.
44. **Comment:** In reference to G.4.e. of the Recreation Guidelines, the wording suggests that abandoning and closing roads should only be done as a last resort.
- BLM Response:** The option of abandoning a road should be considered equally with other options to determine the best method to meet the Standards for Public Land Health.
45. **Comment:** Current wording of G.3 of the Recreation Guidelines will open the door to massive closures of public lands to various uses, especially motorized vehicle use.
- BLM Response:** This guideline reinforces existing regulations (43CFR8340 and 8360) as well as Executive Orders 11644 and 11989. To meet these regulatory requirements, it may be necessary to restrict certain uses. However, there is nothing in what is written in G.3. that would “open the door to massive closures of public lands”.
46. **Comment:** F.8. of the Recreation Guidelines places environmental protection above recreation use.
- BLM Response:** The Land Health Standards are land use plan decisions that apply to all uses of public lands. The purpose of the Recreation Guidelines is to provide management with the tools to meet the standards.
47. **Comment:** At least some opportunities of each recreation type should remain open year round.
- BLM Response:** Generally, BLM lands are managed to accommodate a variety of uses. Decisions to allocate uses that would result in limitations to certain uses are completed through the land use planning process.

48. **Comment:** Off-road travel is generally no longer an appropriate use of our public lands, off-road play areas are not appropriate if they compromise land health standards.

BLM Response: The use of off-highway vehicles to gain access to and recreate on BLM lands will continue to be a valid use on the public lands. The use of such vehicles, however, must be responsible and in such a manner that meets the Standards for Public Land Health.

49. **Comment:** When any roads/trails are closed, the rationale must be made clear to the public through signs and other information.

BLM Response: To add clarity, Guideline G.6. will be modified to read: *Provide clear maps, signs, guidelines, descriptions, and other information for users of routes, trails, and other facilities or areas, including mileages and estimated hours of travel by type, limitations caused by travel surfaces and conditions, and availability of loop trails. Provide clear information to the public when closures, seasonal use, and other regulations or limits are placed on public lands.*

50. **Comment:** It would be more prudent to spend time and energy toward education then in additional regulations and restrictions.

BLM Response: Information and education are key components for a successful recreation program. However, restrictions may be necessary in some areas to meet management objectives and the Standards for Public Land Health. It is not anticipated that new regulations will be necessary.

51. **Comment:** Motorized access must also recognize all RS2477 rights-of-way.

BLM Response: Transportation planning will consider all valid, existing rights including RS2477. Furthermore, any “emergency” actions must all consider valid, existing rights.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Dennis Zachman at the BLM Colorado State Office at 303-239-3883, or at dennis_zachman@blm.gov.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this process.